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# Cattle sale changes coming

## BLUE GRASS STOCKYARDS HAS NEW FACILITY, TIMES

By Greg Kocher

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Some things never change -- but selling cattle isn't one of them.

A number of changes are about to go into effect for Central Kentucky beef producers who sell through Lexington-based Blue Grass Stockyards.

First, today is the last day for sales at the Garrard County Stockyards in Lancaster, which has been in operation since the 1930s. Blue Grass Stockyards bought the Lancaster yard from a group of investors in January.

Blue Grass intends to shift sales from Lancaster to a new \$8 million facility in Stanford.

The first day of sales at the new Stanford facility will be July 26, and sales thereafter will be on Mondays and Thursdays, said Gene Barber, chairman of Blue Grass Stockyards.

In late June, Blue Grass Stockyards purchased Madison Livestock Sales in Richmond from a group of local investors for \$2.2 million.

The sales day and start time for the Richmond yard will change from 9:30 a.m. Thursdays to 8:30 a.m. Fridays. That change goes into effect July 27.

The Madison County yard was attractive because it is only about 15 years old, said Jim Akers, chief operating officer for Blue Grass.

"It's all-steel construction and very much built for the long haul, and that's been very much our mind-set," Akers said.

That "mind-set" has been to make it more convenient for farmers to sell their livestock through Blue Grass. And so through the purchase of outlying markets or, as in Stanford, the construction of a new facility, Blue Grass has sought to be closer to potential customers.

"We're trying to relieve some of the pressure on the old facility here in Lexington by getting services 50 miles out from Lexington," Akers said.

In addition to yards in Lexington, Stanford, and Richmond, Blue Grass also owns stockyards in Mount Sterling and Campbellsville, plus half-interest in one in Maysville.

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Other than the hope to build a new yard somewhere in Central Kentucky, Blue Grass Stockyards doesn't plan to buy any other yards, Akers said.

"We pretty well have our plate full at the moment," he said.

Meanwhile, the saga continues on where to put a new facility in or around Lexington.

The Lexington facility is dilapidated and needs to be replaced. Blue Grass had sought to put its new yard in Fayette off Interstate 75 near the Kentucky Horse Park, which will host the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games. But at the request of Gov. Ernie Fletcher, Blue Grass began to look elsewhere.

So Blue Grass sought to buy land at an industrial park off Interstate 64 north of Midway. But nearby residents had concerns about that, and eventually filed a lawsuit seeking to void an ordinance that allowed the stockyards to move there. In the end, negotiations broke off between the stockyards and the economic development authority that owns the Midway park.

Since then, Barber said, several Fayette sources have courted the stockyards.

"We've gotten a lot of calls from Farm Bureau, city council people, the mayor, everybody. The politicians in Fayette County want the stockyards to stay here," Barber said. "So we may try to find a piece of property here in Fayette County and start all over again."

He added: "It's nice to be wanted again."

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